

Dear Forest Supervisor Linda Jackson,

As a river user, fisherman, raft guide, and lover of wild and free flowing rivers, I am grateful to you and the Forest Service for taking the time to hear public comment on this highly delicate issue. I trust that you will spend time digesting each comment and that my points made here will be taken into account.

Under its current proposal status, this project requires unacceptable risks to and outright damnation of critically endangered species such as Chinook Salmon, Steelhead, Bull Trout, as well as countless other less-threatened species, calls for the destruction of sacred hunting and fishing sites used since time immemorial by the land's Indigenous peoples, and destroys in perpetuity so many aspects of this place that lovers of the outdoors care so deeply for. It cannot be allowed to be permitted.

The threats posed to the critically endangered fish that live in the South Fork of the Salmon watershed are of a scale that cannot be fully comprehended, or perhaps is not being fully comprehended by supporters of this project. The current SGP plan calls for the outright destruction (for eternity, capital E) of a highly trafficked and critically important spawning stream for all three endangered species: Meadow Creek. Meadow Creek, as it stands, is to be permanently buried under 400 feet of mine tailings. Since its inception, this project has featured highly manicured rhetoric around its restoration and reclamation goals, claiming that Perpetua's presence in the watershed will actually be beneficial to the ecosystem. To me, that sounds like a cancer cell claiming it will be beneficial to the organism because it will mask the symptoms of previous ailments. It's absurd. How can the permanent destruction of such a critical resource for the watershed be seen as restoration, or even reclamation, under any reasonable definition? It can't, and Perpetua's blind promises suggest that their leaders might need some bifocals that see more than just profit margins for shareholders.

Stream temperatures are projected to be elevated for more than 100 years within the site boundary, an elevation that will cause localized extinction events. As climate change continues to take its toll on ecosystems like this one, water temperatures will continue to rise on their own. We have seen this take place in recent years in the SFSR watershed and its adjacent MFSR. These streams and their tributaries represent the best cold-water refuge for anadromous and resident fish who necessitate cold and clean water. It is extremely unwise to permit a project that will jeopardize these already sensitive water temperatures further.

The notion that doubling (and then some) the existing mining footprint in the area can be considered restoration is a slap in the face to those who value words and their

definitions. Over half of the 3,500 acres which the project will occupy would be in pristine and undisturbed areas. These pristine and undisturbed areas are made up of rugged ridge lines, healthy wetlands, and critical habitat for hundreds of species. The nature of the landscape here is not conducive to a project like this, and new development of this landscape via roads, buildings, and open pit mines, will inevitably be interrupted by events like avalanches, landslides, and floods, likely leading to hugely harmful spills of toxic chemicals into this threatened watershed.

It is foolish to attempt to build roads through some of Idaho's most avalanche prone terrain, and it is doubly as foolish to do it through elk migration routes and along wilderness borders. The construction of the new Burnt Log road along the border of the Frank Church Wilderness is an encroachment that is unacceptable. The traffic that will occupy this road during its construction and throughout the rest of its life will increase noise and light pollution within the wilderness area. For the last four years, I have worked as a river guide on the Middle Fork of the Salmon. I have run dozens of trips down this river and accompanied hundreds of visitors through its canyon. Consistently and without fail, one of the things that the guests are enamored by is the lack of disturbance from the outside world here. It is the darkest place in the lower 48 and one of the quietest, save for the water sounds reverberating off of the granite walls and the calls of canyon wrens in the morning. This place is special. And not just to me; it is special to every single person (a figure in the hundreds-of-thousands-range) who has ever set foot within its inviting borders. Inviting as they are to respectful visitors, they are not intended to be inviting to the very things which the wilderness act seeks to prevent. Pollution. Via noise, light, traffic, garbage, or toxic mining chemicals, pollution is sure to find its way into the Frank Church as a result of this project. It will seep its way into the last and best protected habitat for anadromous fish, into the rugged landscape which harbors the West's most iconic species, into the most sacred of sacred places for Indigenous nations who have stewarded and lived with this land since time immemorial.

The SFSR watershed, for tens and tens of thousands of years, has been lived in and loved by Indigenous people. The SGP's proposed boundaries fall inside the traditional lands of the Nez Perce Tribe, though the South Fork's waters are still fished by other Tribes today. Our country's history of stripping these lands away from their people, genociding entire nations, and subsequently destroying the ties which bind the people to their land and the land to its people is abhorrent, vile, and disgusting. Colonial powers have, since their first presence on this continent, worked tirelessly to convert the land into a resource to be used and capitalized upon by the wealthy. It is the belief of some that colonization was an event that happened hundreds of years ago, and this belief is a false one. Colonization is not an event, but an act, and it is ongoing today. This proposed mine is an act of colonization. To destroy forever the sacred hunting and

fishing sites used by the Nez Perce and the Shoshone Bannock Tribes is evil, and it is illegal. The treaty rights and promises to which we are constitutionally bound state that these Tribes shall be granted access to all usual and accustomed sites, of which there are dozens within the SFSR watershed. Treaties are the supreme law of the land, and this project violates them on numerous counts. Not only does it destroy these sacred locations and work to encumber an entire way of life, but it also spites the unending efforts of the Tribes to restore this place from previous evils. The Nez Perce Tribe, in collaboration with other conservation groups and citizens, has worked tirelessly to help the SFSR watershed back into health after it was nearly destroyed by previous mining. Over decades, with careful management and through the beautiful process that is natural ecological restoration, the SFSR has nearly made a complete comeback. THAT is true restoration. THAT is land defense. THAT is care. All of this progress, all of the love that has gone into this restoration, will be for not if this project is permitted.

As I'm sure you're aware, Idaho's Chinook salmon and Steelhead are in crisis. These fish are responsible for a vast majority of the nutrients on which this ecosystem depends, and they are going extinct. Over the last few decades, nearly 18 billion dollars has been spent on recovery attempts, and with little to show for it. They are hanging on by a thread, and that thread is cold and clear and is called the Salmon river. A project like the SGP spits in the face of the decades of hard work that Tribes, activists, conservation groups, fishermen, and civilians have put in to saving these iconic species. Idaho depends on these fish more than we know; they are a fundamental link in our pristine ecology, they account for billions of dollars in local tourism economies each year, and they are a centerpiece in the cultures, traditions, and ways of life for the regions Indigenous Tribes. The SFSR makes up some of the best spawning and rearing habitat we have left for these fish, and it will all be destroyed by a mining project like this one. Streams will be dewatered, channelized, and buried, water will warm to lethal temperatures, toxic spills will poison tributaries and watersheds, and this place will be forever damaged.

All of this is included, recognized, and accepted in the SDEIS. How it is accepted under any healthy conscience is a miracle to me. Perhaps there are very few healthy consciences left making these decisions. But I believe that you, supervisor, might possess one. And I believe that you will hear the cries of the public, that you will see the ecological and cultural devastation that is posed, and that you will make the correct decision by refusing to grant Perpetua's permits and shutting this project down forever. I sincerely thank you for taking the time to hear and process my concerns and the concerns of my peers.

Asa Menlove

